

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 17, 2014

The Honorable Francis Collins, M.D., Ph.D.  
Director  
National Institutes of Health  
6707 Democracy Blvd  
Suite 400 MSC 5484  
Bethesda, MD 20892-5484

Dear Dr. Collins:

We are writing to urge the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to prioritize combating the number one killer of women in this country: heart disease. We firmly believe that through your leadership and focus, we can make important strides toward improving women's heart health.

*Heart Truth* and other campaigns have helped move the awareness needle and we were pleased to hear your announcement earlier this year regarding the inclusion of women in pre-clinical trials of women's health research and analysis. This is an important step toward greater knowledge of gender differences and how heart disease presents itself and affects women differently as compared to men. This is a fundamental change in the way research is conducted on women's heart disease and we are hopeful that all federal agencies adopt this decision. While this is an important first step, women still need to be represented in sufficient numbers in Phase I and II trials, when safety and efficacy is addressed, in order to identify any noted sex differences early.

Despite this decision, women's heart disease continues to be under-researched, misdiagnosed, and left untreated too often. While not enough is being done to recognize the differences and appropriately treat heart disease in women, we believe that your leadership could have a huge impact on combating women's cardiovascular disease. Heart disease kills more women than all cancers combined and, since 1984, more women than men have died from heart disease. Yet, for the last 50 years, women's heart treatment has largely been based on medical research on men – often to negative results. For example, 42 percent of women who have a heart attack die within one year, as compared to 24 percent of men. We also know that women have more repeat heart attacks and greater risk of stroke after a heart attack.

Similar to how we worked alongside non-profit leaders to change the trajectory of breast cancer, we know that the federal government can make a significant impact with targeted investments in research and programs that will save women's lives. We ask you to examine the programs under your purview in an effort to devote more attention and resources to women's heart disease.

Every minute, a woman dies from heart disease. We cannot let another year pass with 400,000 more women dying because these disparities are not addressed. Thank you for your consideration of our comments. We want to be as helpful as possible in working with you to identify areas where we can address this important issue.

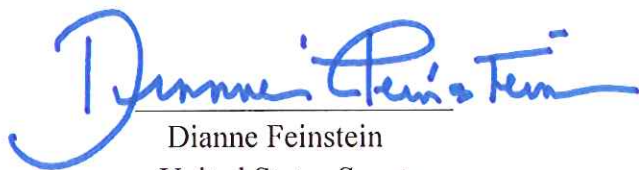
Sincerely,



Barbara A. Mikulski  
United States Senator



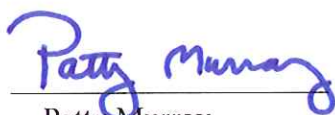
Debbie Stabenow  
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator



Barbara Boxer  
United States Senator



Patty Murray  
United States Senator



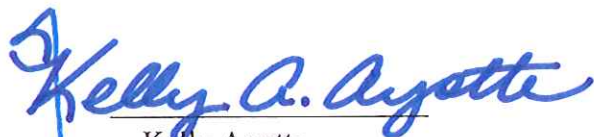
Mary Landrieu  
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator



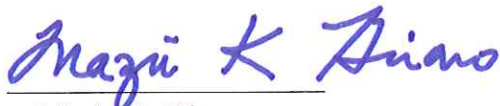
Kirsten E. Gillibrand  
United States Senator



Kelly Ayotte  
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator